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September 2004

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# Good Stewards in Every Sense of the word

Anne Comeaux



This issue of *Catechetical Leader* profiles the work of some of our colleagues who have stepped out of the traditional roles of parish catechetical leader, diocesan catechetical office personnel or religious education academic. We have termed them “catechetical entrepreneurs.” These people are the innovators who have catechesis as their focus but do their ministry by organizing conferences, writing and speaking on varying catechetical topics, doing research to support their presentations and helping others to be better leaders through consultations and training. They are primarily their own bosses, although they sometimes write and consult for some of our catechetical publishing partners. We frequently look to these entrepreneurs as the initiators of new concepts and practices in our ministry. Many of us know some or all of them individually and count

- Share credit wisely.  
Translation: Affirm your staff and your catechists in the presence of your pastor, bishop or supervisor.
- Do any job needed to make the dream work regardless of your job description.  
Translation: Be ready, willing and available to do whatever it takes, whoever you are: catechists can make presentations at meetings and directors can move furniture!
- Keep the best interests of the organization and customers in mind at all times.  
Translation: The ministry is not about us; it is about the Gospel and the people of God.

The theme for **Catechetical Sunday** this year is “Stewards of God’s Gifts” which is based on the parable of the clever steward

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*“Although many of us must operate as managers in our positions,  
we know that above that we are ministers.”*

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them as friends. I hope you enjoy getting to know all of them in a little different light through the presentations in this issue.

After you have read the stories of the entrepreneurial catechetical leaders, stop and think about what this can mean for the rest of us in our ministries. Perhaps we can be challenged to look at our own parishes and dioceses and see if some of their principles can be applied to what we do on a daily basis.

**Leadership in the corporate** world has known for a number of years about *intrapreneuring*. This term refers to creating a climate of innovation that brings out the entrepreneurial spirit of the organization and enables people to work within the organization. Gifford Pinchot first wrote about this concept in his book *Intrapreneuring* (Harper & Row). Some of his guiding principles are easily transferable to the context of the Catholic Church in which our ministry is done:

- Build your team; intrapreneuring is not a solo job.  
Translation: build relationships among your staff and across offices.

in Luke’s Gospel. The point made in the Gospel is that Jesus’ disciples are only half as clever at promoting the kingdom as the steward is at promoting his own well being. How can we, as those who are to proclaim the Good News, be more clever evangelizers? Perhaps the concept of “intrapreneuring” is one tool that we can utilize to make our catechetical ministry more innovative and relevant at the beginning of this millennium.

Although many of us must operate as managers in our positions, we know that above that we are ministers. The materials for Catechetical Sunday also offer some suggestions about what we should be like to be good stewards. The authors of the materials suggest that Christian stewards are committed, attentive, resourceful, thankful, generous and bold. This is a pretty challenging list of attributes but the catechetical leaders I know are up to that challenge. We must consider the challenges and bring ourselves in prayer to the Lord asking that we be able to develop the strength, love and vision to become the disciples who are needed in this modern world. ■

# Entrepreneurship: advancing the gospel

Neil A. Parent



**I think entrepreneurship** is in my blood. My grandfather was an entrepreneur, as was my father, as are my brothers. Uncles on both sides of the family owned small companies, more often than not eking out livings by enduring long hours and lots of trial and error.

Some of them were able to look back at the end of their careers with a certain justifiable pride in their hard-won accomplishments. My grandfather, on the other hand, had his dreams more than once dashed on the rocks by plain bad luck. For example, he once borrowed money to build homes for sale in what was then a hot housing market in Southern California. The year was 1929. The Great Depression hit like a tidal wave, and it took years for him to recover.

ahead. But we use here as it is defined by the Kauffman Foundation: “a process through which individuals and groups pursue opportunity, leverage resources, and initiate change to create value.”

**Think of it.** Our whole history as a church is filled with powerful stories of entrepreneurs who advanced the Gospel. How else do we describe Benedict, Ignatius of Loyola, Mother Theresa and other great founders who created new, fresh and daring ways to bolster the church’s mission? How else do we think of reformers like Theresa of Avila and Francis of Assisi who saw a need and tackled it with unrelenting zeal?

Understood in this way, entrepreneurship is something we are all called to exercise, whether we hold a position within the church structure or operate in a parallel capacity. Both Matthew (25: 14–30) and Luke (19: 12–27) recount how Jesus, in his parable of the talents, stresses that the

*“It is precisely this dual contribution of church employees and church entrepreneurs that makes our catechetical ministry so wonderfully rich today.”*

I suppose this history, along with my own interests, played a role in my suggesting that one of the first issues of *Catechetical Leader* be on what I termed “catechetical entrepreneurs.” I greatly admire those who by virtue of their wits, creativity, courage and love of the ministry are making significant contributions to catechesis, apart from holding an official position within the church. I wanted to draw attention to the many people and organizations who, at some risk, help advance the cause of catechetical ministry.

**And need I point out** that NCCL is itself one of those organizations? We exist because entrepreneurial diocesan CCD directors decades ago saw that the ministry could be better served if there were a professional organization to utilize the talents of catechetical leaders across the land. While we work closely with bishops and other church officials, we are on our own. What we do and how we do it depend upon the talent that exists within our membership and staff. As an organization we try not simply to react to events but also to anticipate them, to help shape the future of catechesis in the country by being as creative and enterprising as possible.

For some, entrepreneurship has bad connotations. The word conjures up images of people going for the buck, wheeling and dealing to get

good and faithful servants are those who creatively use the talents given them, not those who simply preserve the *status quo*.

If there is a regret I have about this issue, it is our inability to have highlighted many more of the individuals and organizations that are doing wonderful things on behalf of the Gospel. All of their stories deserve telling.

The choice of persons featured in this issue is partly the result of planning and partly the result of circumstances. Those pictured on the front cover were present at the same event in early 2004. We seized the opportunity to photograph them and invite them to tell their stories. As for the publishers, we wanted one with a long history, one that is relatively young, and one that is small.

**We invite you** to enter into the stories of each person or company and draw inspiration for your own ministry. We also invite you to read what our writers have to say in *Catechetical Update*. They are church employees who address important aspects of ecclesial lay ministry. It is precisely this dual contribution of church employees and church entrepreneurs that makes our catechetical ministry so wonderfully rich today. ■

*en • tre • pre • neur • ship:*

a process through which individuals and groups pursue opportunity, leverage resources, and initiate change to create value.

—Kauffman Foundation

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**What do the people** on our cover have in common with Fortune 500 CEOs? Not vast personal or corporate wealth, it's probably safe to surmise—nor that goal. What they do seem to share is a **spirit of entrepreneurship** and a good measure of the qualities needed to make entrepreneurial ventures successful: **vision, purpose, passion, creativity, risk taking, judgment, management skills.**

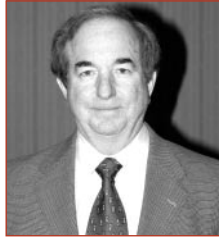
**Like the wise steward** of Jesus' parable, they have not buried their talents but invested them to pursue a mission: advancing the Gospel. They have been sufficiently down-to-earth to make catechesis an economically viable business venture—but their mission is to create **wealth of a different kind.**

Read on...

# Tim Ragan:

## let me be your server

By Mary Kay Schoen, *Contributing Editor*



Tim Ragan



“**M**y name’s Tim and I will be your server for this weekend,” the man in the dark green apron announced to the 2000 people in catechetical ministry gathered in the hotel ballroom. He went on to say that the weekend’s menu featured whole community catechesis and everyone was invited to the table—and into the kitchen as well.

The occasion was the 2004 East Coast Conference for Religious Education in Washington, DC, and the server was Tim Ragan, its founder and driving force for the past thirty-two years. The image of ‘server’ strikes just the right note coming from this unassuming but self-assured man who’d much rather to talk with an interviewer about his work than about himself.

Despite his success in developing the East Coast Conference from the germ of an idea to a major event in the field of catechesis, he balks at being described as an entrepreneur. “It’s not *my* word,” he says. “For me that means somebody who wants to get into business and make a lot of money. I don’t think of what I do in terms of business.” He does concede that his organization, the National Council for Pastoral Leaders (NCPL), faces the same kinds of issues that businesses do. An observer might be forgiven for seeing his clear-eyed focus, determination, optimism, market savvy, and ability to leverage resources as classically entrepreneurial.

The genesis of the East Coast Conference was his perception of an unmet need. After leaving the seminary in 1970 “I wanted to continue with what I’d been learning,” he explains. He took a position as DRE (a new position at the time) at St. John’s Parish in Severna Park, Maryland, where he still lives. During his first year he went to a professional development conference in Florida, enjoyed it, learned a lot, and applied what he had learned. Disappointed that there was nothing similar in the Washington, DC, area, he recruited some friends, put in a little money of his own, borrowed some from his father, and organized a conference himself. “There were lots of good people in the area and a positive feeling in the air ...a sense of *aggorniamiento*,” he recalls.

## ...leverage resources...

*continued on page 23*

**Have you had an “a-ha” moment you’d like to share with your colleagues in catechesis?**

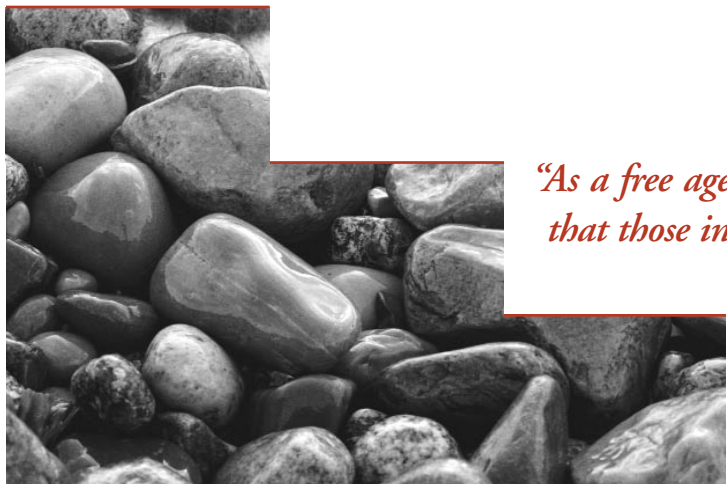
Send your *Insights* (400 words or less) to [jcridler@nccl.org](mailto:jcridler@nccl.org) to be considered for publication.

*Insights* will be a regular feature in *CL* if contributors come forward.

Previously unpublished writers are especially invited to submit.

# Stepping Stones to New Territory

By Kathy Hendricks



*“As a free agent, I can often see the potential for partnerships that those in the trenches might miss.”*



I never thought of myself as an entrepreneur. The term seems appropriate, however, since I have reached a point where speaking and writing about catechesis, family, and spirituality constitute my “job”. Looking back, I can recognize significant points along the way that created a foundation for my current ministry and a direction for the future.

Like stepping stones laid across uneven terrain, they give me balance and allow me to leap into new territory.

...create  
value...

## MENTORS

Would any of us remain in ministry without the inspiration of mentors, those people who sometimes pushed us where we thought we could not go? My list is lengthy and varied—Sr. Georgeanne, the youth minister who entrusted a junior high class to my care, giving me my first taste of what it means to be a catechist. Fr. Jim, the pastor who invited me to take on the role of parish DRE in our small Alaskan parish. George, the supervisor who challenged me as a diocesan director in Colorado Springs to do “fewer things well.” There are numerous professors, publishers, and peers who, along the way, saw something of merit in what I was doing and potential in what I could become. It was with their affirmation that I was able to take on varied roles over the years.

A large part of my work involves traveling to different dioceses, offering workshops and retreats for catechists, pastoral leaders, and parents. At one such gathering, I was approached by a young woman. “I want to do what you do,” she exclaimed. Her goal was to become a parish catechetical leader. As a circuit-riding speaker, I strive to mentor others by sharing stories of what catechetical ministry entails and the signs I see of its growth across the country.

## STRUGGLES

Parish or diocesan ministry is not for the faint of heart. Job descriptions keep ballooning while resources shrink. The church has no shortage of people who, at times, behave badly towards one another. Like domestic violence, conflicts within religious institutions are often volatile and far-reaching in magnitude, leaving us feeling demoralized and discouraged. Many good and generous people are driven away from pulpit and pew as a result.

It is through the struggles, however, that I have learned to appreciate how we, as church, are part of a forgiving community. This has motivated me to “minister to the ministers”. By facilitating retreats and days of prayer for overworked DREs and other pastoral leaders, I hope to shed light into what may have otherwise become a hazy and gray reality.

## OPPORTUNITIES

NCCL has long recognized the multiple partnerships that exist within the catechetical world. As a contributing writer to several of William H. Sadlier’s programs and as one of their national consultants, I am able to develop resources for children and families that share the story of Catholic faith and practice in creative ways. Likewise, as the general editor of the USCCB’s Catechetical Sunday materials I promote catechetical ministry year after year, and celebrate the commitment of those dedicated to it.

One of the greatest aspects of *entrepreneurship* is helping others to recognize the prospects that may be lying dormant along their own paths. I stay connected with various groups, organizations, and institutions in order to strengthen the possibilities for collaboration and cooperation, especially between home and parish. As a free agent, I can often see the potential for partnerships that those in the trenches might miss. I have the time that parish and diocesan leaders don’t to research resources and then to pass them on through my writing and speaking. It is a way of sharing the good news of our ministry with a broad range of people and it places me in a position to help create, develop, and promote materials that further our work.

## EDUCATION

I have studied a great deal over the course of my life as I pursued graduate and post-graduate degrees and participated in ministerial certification programs, conferences, seminars, workshops, and retreats. Lifelong learning is a key value of catechesis, one that each of us must embrace as an ongoing part of our ministerial journey.

We also learn by doing. In my own experience, I cannot say that I was ever completely *ready* to take on the jobs that I did. Through the help of patient mentors and forgiving communities, I muddled through my *firsts*—as parish DRE, diocesan director, national board member and advisor, pastoral administrator, and publisher’s consultant.

*continued on page 20*

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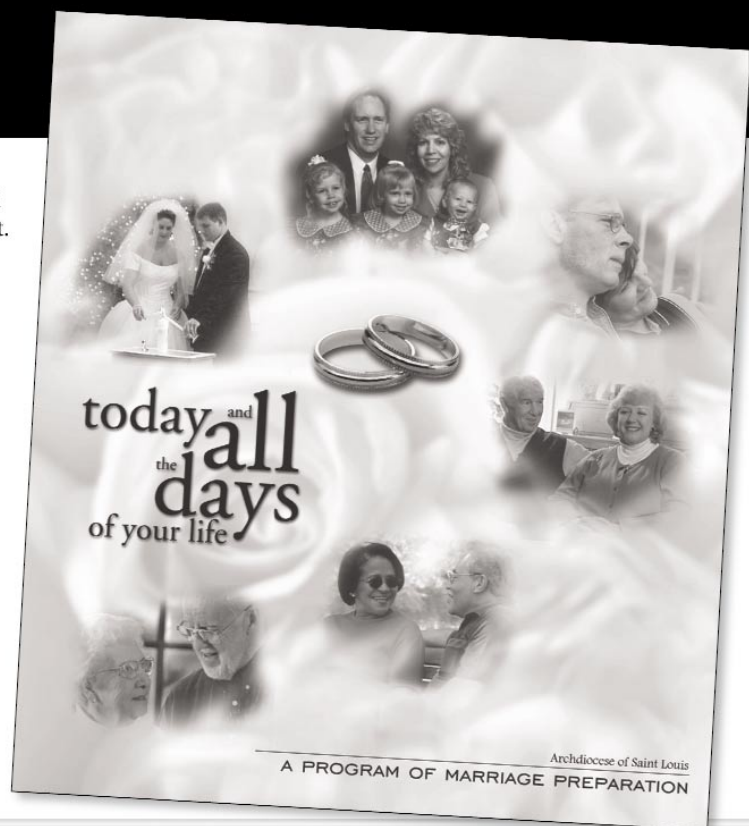
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# Publishing the WORD

By Mary Kay Schoen, *Contributing Editor*

**M**artin Luther, as we well know, grasped the potential of emerging technology as well as the tenor of his times. He embraced the printing press and understood the importance of speaking to people in the language of their everyday lives. The rest is catechetical history.

The church in this country has, from its beginnings, been blessed with faithful Catholics who have tuned in to the culture around them and—like Luther—have seen how new technology and new learning can serve catechesis. In the 1830s two Irish immigrants, brothers Dennis and James Sadlier, printed the first American edition of Butler's *Lives of the Saints*. Through the tide of immigration and the rise of Catholic education, to the fertile period following Vatican II to the electronic revolution of the past few years, American Catholic publishers have embraced new developments in theology, culture, technology and understanding of how people learn. Here we profile three of them: William H. Sadlier, RCL and E.T. Nedder. Though they differ in origins, size, and emphasis, their stories illustrate how catechesis gets done by means of that quintessentially American talent: entrepreneurship.

## SADLIER: PUBLISHING PIONEERS



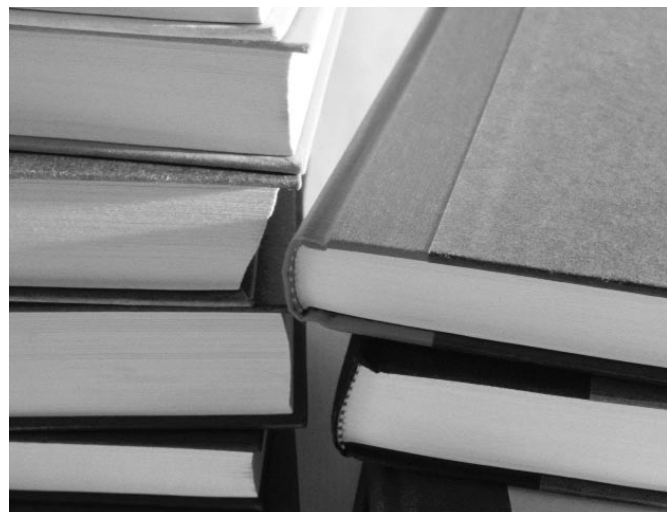
Mary Anne Sadlier

“James Sadlier was fortunate that he married Mary Anne Sadlier,” says Bill Dinger, president of William H. Sadlier, Inc. Mrs. James Sadlier was a prolific writer of inspirational novels and she translated religious texts from German and French. Making use of her abilities, the brothers’ firm of D&J Sadlier served the immigrant community, then largely Irish. Mary Anne’s mission was broader than religious education, says Dinger. She wanted her countrymen to respect their spiritual and cultural heritage.

Dinger recounts the family story of a nephew of the printers who came home from his honeymoon “expecting to run the store.” Not invited into the business, he formed a company in his own name: William H. Sadlier. Seeing an opportunity in the expanding Catholic schools movement in the 1870s, he obtained the rights to the A.S. Barnes textbooks being used in public schools and brought American Catholic heritage into the texts. His untimely death at age 31 left his wife Annie Sadlier, mother of their three small children, in the leadership role. She was in the forefront of the Catholic schools movement as a publisher of textbooks. But like many of the nineteenth-century women in ministry who pushed forward Catholic schools, hospitals and catechesis, she had to surmount legal and cultural obstacles. (The New York State Legislature passed a special bill permitting her to continue in business, but only if she would sign documents in her late husband’s name.)

By the 1930s the firm was headed by F. Sadlier Dinger, nephew of William H. and Annie Sadlier and father of Sadlier’s current leaders: board chairman Frank Dinger and president William Dinger. “It was my father,” says Bill Dinger, “who saw the need to bring something to the catechism to make it come alive in the classroom.” The company recruited a leading catechist and curriculum expert in religious education, Dr. Ellamay Horan, to add study notes to the Baltimore Catechism. These editions remained on sale until the 1960s.

*“At workshops and conferences Bill Dinger is constantly on the lookout for people, listening to people, identifying who the voices are in education and catechetics.”*



...pursue  
opportunities...

*Sadlier continued on page 16* ■



## RCL: CATCHING THE WAVE OF VATICAN II



Dick Leach

RCL Resources for Christian Living is another family-owned publishing house that has made catechesis both its mission and its business. Like Sadlier, it grew out of a family printing business but in a very different time and place. It was born in a Chicago basement at the height of Vatican II.

Founder Richard C. Leach, after graduating from Loyola University and working ten years at his father's printing firm, Argus Press, wanted to get into publishing. "From the very beginning, Dick had a desire to serve the church using the skills and talents God gave him," says Maryann Nead, RCL president. His passionate

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*"Dick Leach really believed that in order to do catechesis well, you had to stay in touch with the signs of the times."*

---

interest in the unfolding Second Vatican Council eventually led him to meet with a religious sister from the archdiocesan office who had set up a studio (five reel-to-reel tape recorders) in a basement at Loyola University to copy seminal lectures on the liturgy reforms of the Council. She agreed to a business proposal from Leach and the lectures became a tape series called *Study the Liturgy*, the first project of Argus Communications, in 1964. Leach then arranged to tape summer lecture tours by biblical scholars and theological experts and marketed them through direct mail to parishes and convents, which were hungry for material on the Council. Soon Argus Communications was producing books, posters and learning materials.

"Dick was a true entrepreneur," says Nead. Leach, who died in 2001 at age 74, did not limit himself to religious publishing. A father of nine, he pursued family interests and was quick to move when he saw an opportunity or unmet need. After he learned that one of his children had dyslexia, and finding that no one was publishing (or funding) materials for teaching children with learning disabilities, he started Developmental Learning Materials and caught the wave as federal funding became available for special education in the early 1970s. In 1983 he started ColorDynamics, a commercial printing company. Watching technological trends, he set up a video studio in his new home base in Allen, Texas. When his daughter-in-law suggested educational videos for young children, he funded the project, which developed into a PBS series with Barney, the wildly popular singing dinosaur.

*Leach continued on page 17*

## E.T. NEDDER: NEW PATHS, PERSONAL VISION



Ernie Nedder

Some religious subjects are always in demand. Like the Sadlier brothers more than 150 years earlier, Ernie Nedder began his publishing business with stories about the lives of saints. These stories, however, were in a series entitled *Can the Saints Come Out to Play?* and were published simultaneously in English and Spanish.

That choice for the first publication of E.T. Nedder Publishing reflects the entrepreneurial vision of its founder. When he began his publishing business in 1994, Nedder chose a focus: "We did not want to replace large curriculums but to supplement them. We looked at what was wanting in religious education—practical, easy-to-use, inexpensive or reproducible materials—and resources for small parishes or dioceses that did not want to invest in large expensive programs."

Nedder brought to his publishing venture a background in both ministry and business. A Maronite Catholic, he had been engaged to be married and had received minor orders before the celibacy rules for Maronite clergy in the United States were abruptly changed, so that he could no longer marry and be ordained and work in the US. So he married and became a junior high school teacher, and later a diocesan administrator, in religious education. He did workshops on understanding and teaching adolescents. "My wife always says my first love is religious education," he says.

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*"A business consultant as well as a publisher, Ernie Nedder applies the insights of management expert Peter Druckers to the business of catechesis."*

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A business consultant as well as a publisher, Nedder applies the insights of management expert Peter Druckers to the business of catechesis. "What matters is how you look at things," he has learned. Druckers counsels managers to look at change—in demographics, in perceptions, in processes.

"Some thought there would be little opportunity for religious education publishing after Vatican II. It was quite the opposite," he points out. "Now there is a market for materials such as guides for parents to use in 'teachable moments.'" He worked with Ron Wilkens at William C. Brown, Inc. (later Brown/Roa

*Nedder continued on page 16*

# Making Plain the Way to an adult church

By Bill Huebsch



*No one may be less inclined toward business jargon than Bill Huebsch, author of *The General Directory for Catechesis*—in Plain English and *Whole Community Catechesis: In Plain English*. But as a proponent of whole community catechesis, his vision, passion and leveraging of resources could certainly be termed entrepreneurial. He responded to questions from Catechetical Leader about his work in his usual plain English:*

My work in catechesis is aimed at helping folks use whole community catechesis to implement the two key documents that now guide our work, the *General Directory for Catechesis* and *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*. Of course, all of us who work in catechesis share the same goal really, which is to help pass on the faith of the church in ways that are faithful to our *Catechism*. So these three major documents form a sort of background for all I'm doing.

I got started in this work because there was a great need to synthesize and make plain the visionary work of so many dedicated scholars and leaders. Whole community catechesis was born of dozens of great figures: people like Sr. Kate Dooley and Fr. Berard Marthaler of Catholic University in Washington, Francois Darcy-Berube, John Westerhoff, Maria Harris, and many others. And Bishop Ray Lucker of course, who had great influence on me. My work is a synthesis of theirs. And there are others besides me who are giving impetus to this shift right now. I'm thinking of folks like Jane Regan from Boston College, Michael Horan from Loyola Marymount, Maureen Shaughnessy, Bob Hater, and others.

The main way I advance catechesis is by making the documents and the work we do in implementing them more understandable. Often, scholarly works and official church documents are challenging to read and digest. So I try to provide summaries, commentaries, and more poetic language so more people can understand what it is the church is saying.

...initiate  
change...



*“The main way I advance catechesis is by making the documents and the work we do in implementing them more understandable.”*

The bishops are the teachers of the church, of course. But how we shift from a children's focus to one aimed more at the whole parish community is a practical matter with which the bishops have not as yet become fully involved. That's where I come in. I have a practical side, resulting from my own years as a parish and diocesan worker in Minnesota. I do writing, teaching, and advising. They all sort of swim together a bit. One leads into the other.

When a diocesan staff decides to host a conference to expand catechesis from children-only to the whole community, they often give me a call. Together we plan a training day or two. They invite their parish leaders and I show up ready to help open up some new ideas, affirm what they've got going now, and deliver the message of the GDC. I am usually sponsored when I do this by the people at Harcourt Religion Publishers, who have committed themselves to this vision.

I do not work with any particular model of whole community catechesis. There are so many! I support them all in a sense. But I do believe strongly in the use of a spiral scope and sequence, one in which the children's education program returns to each topic each year in an ever deeper, more age appropriate way. So when the second grade is studying sacraments, all the other grades are, too, and the rest of the parish can also join in. In this way, we can use the children's program as a springboard to the rest of the community.

catechesis with adults. Making the shift from kids to the rest of the community isn't liberal or conservative. It's the new norm, established by the bishops themselves. Here's the thing: When a local leader steps up and begins promoting ways to make this shift, in any diocese, the shift begins to happen.

I think the most important work we will do in catechesis is to reach beyond the kids, to bring the adults into the learning circle of the

*“Making the shift from kids to the rest of the community isn't liberal or conservative. It's the new norm, established by the bishops themselves.”*

I really don't think being an “outside person” has much influence on what I do. Diocesan leaders are the heroes of this reform right now. Working with minimal budgets and reduced staff, they're keeping alive the spirit and energy of the GDC—and they're doing a great job of it, I might add. NCCL and NPCD (National Association of Parish Catechetical Directors) also provide forums where leaders come together to share experiences and ideas. We live in a wonderful national community of folks dedicated to this reform.

church. Parishes that do that (and many are) find that their stewardship problems are gone. They have volunteers they can't use. People get moving on their own journeys of faith. And the overall liturgy of the church is greatly improved. We find that the way to renew parish life is to renew faith in the hearts of folks, to help them meet and know Christ, to “turn toward the face of God” as the GDC puts it in article 56.

This is the future: to create an adult church of Christians of mature faith. I'm so honored to be able to contribute to that. ■

*Bill Huebsch can be reached at [BillHuebsch@aol.com](mailto:BillHuebsch@aol.com).*

I'm not sure how many dioceses around the nation are involved in whole community catechesis but the number is very high. For many years church leaders at every level have been saying we must do better

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# Outsider/Insider:

## doing catechesis on the road

By Jean Marie Hiesberger



*“One of my favorite roles is helping the dedicated volunteers and paid staff people to remember to take care of themselves.”*



It was 1969 and I had a fresh theology degree from St. John's University in Minnesota. Hired by a young priest, Henry Mansell (now Bishop Mansell), I set off with great enthusiasm for Larchmont, a suburb north of New York City. Naively assuming the profession of the parish DRE was flourishing in other parts of the country, as it was in the Midwest, I phoned the New York office and asked how to join the archdiocesan association for DREs. There was a long pause at the other end of the line before a voice asked, “And just what *is* a DRE?” A lot has changed since then in the role of the DRE and, indeed, in the area of catechetics. But for me, the greatest change has been in the role I myself play in this vital ministry.

### THE PERIPATETIC CATECHIST

Now I work from my home office in Kansas City, Missouri, where I've lived for nearly twenty years. The groups with whom I contract are varied both in location and in their requests. At any time I might find myself traveling to the East Coast to work with a publisher, or in Washington, D.C. meeting on a project such as the Best Practices of Catechist Formation for the USCCB Office of Religious Education. I could be in the Midwest working with a diocese on its own catechetical futuring, on the West Coast speaking at a conference, in a mid-Atlantic diocese planning and facilitating their diocesan synod, on the phone with a coaching client or teaching a university summer catechetical course. Today I might be writing textbook materials, preparing catechist reflections for a website or consulting with textbook publishers. Another time I'll be acquiring catechetical trade books for a publisher or editing newsletters. There are so many ways to do catechetical ministry!

What a gift I've been given in the opportunities that have come my way since I began my journey as a DRE. How did this happen? Certainly without a plan or any inkling of the road ahead! I spent more than a decade at Paulist Press traveling the country to speak and

...identify needs...

*continued on page 21*

# Bridging the digital divide

By April Dietrich

Welcome to the Tech Center! Find out how both techies and neophytes can use technology in ministry.

## YOU MIGHT BE A TECHIE IF...

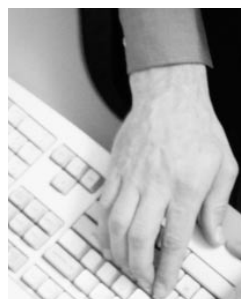
1. You haven't played solitaire with real cards in years.
2. You e-mail, IM or IC the person working at the desk next to you.
3. If your computer goes down, you don't know where you're supposed to be, or when.
5. Someone doesn't know what PowerPoint is and you stare at him, speechless.
6. You carry two briefcases to the annual meeting (or any meeting) one for your laptop and peripherals and one for other "stuff".
7. Your PDA means more to you than your wallet.

## AND...

8. You read this entire list, and kept nodding and smiling.
9. You are too busy to notice there was no #4.
10. You're actually checked that there was no #4.
11. **And now you are laughing** at yourself.

## YOU MIGHT NOT BE A TECHIE IF...

1. You only play solitaire with real cards.
2. If the person at the desk next to yours e-mails, IMs or ICs you, you walk over to her desk to see what she wants.
3. If your computer goes down, of course you know where to be; you keep your calendar in your briefcase.
4. You don't really know what PowerPoint is, and have no desire to learn it.
5. You carry one briefcase and everything you need fits in it: pen, paper, files.
6. Any form of PDA (Public Display of Affection) is offensive to you.
7. You're laughing at the "techies" who checked to see if there was a #4 in this list too.



NCCL's Technology Committee recognizes that for some, the world of technology and its accouterments is a playground where new discoveries await. We also recognize that for others, it's a minefield that must be traversed, filled with potentially explosive devices that could endanger your well being or frighten a person half to death—a place better left to others.

We plan to provide information through this venue on ways technology can assist us in our ministries as catechetical leaders, helping those with various tech comfort levels to bridge the "digital divide". As professionals in catechetical ministry, we are all called upon to "have media education to increase [our] understanding of the impact of social communications on individuals and society and help [us] acquire a manner of communicating that speaks to the sensibilities and interests of people in a media culture," says the Pontifical Council for Social Communications in *The Church and the Internet*.

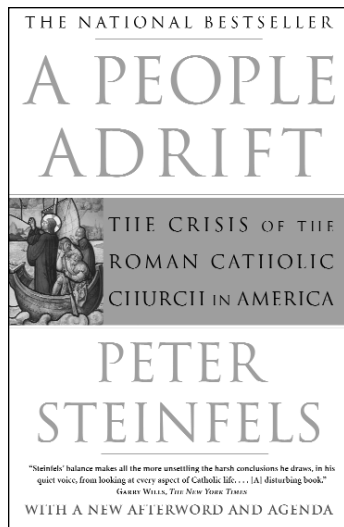
This document calls ministers responsible for evangelization and catechesis to make use of available technology to reach out to those who need to hear the Gospel. It quotes Pope Paul VI in *Communio et Progressio*, saying the church "would feel guilty before the Lord" if it failed to use the media for evangelization. It requires us to train and "re-educate" ourselves to new and different ways that we can effectively use technologies in our ministries.

continued on page 22

# Caught in Crosscurrents

*A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America* by Peter Steinfels. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003. 359 pages.

Reviewed by Dan Thomas



“What worries Catholics today,” observes Peter Steinfels in this recent book discussing the key issues facing Catholics in the United States, “is...not that the faith will be consciously abandoned but that it will simply be lost in the more literal sense, the way one loses a piece of jewelry or an old memento—by casually setting it aside, mislaying it, leaving its absence long unnoticed, finally discovering that it is irrecoverable.”

Steinfels, for many years the senior religion correspondent for the *New York Times*, takes a reporter’s view of the Catholic Church in the United States, discussing the key issues facing American Catholics. A historian as well as a journalist, he analyzes topics ranging from the church in political life to liturgy to the role of women (and much more). He finds the American church not only “adrift,” but caught in crosscurrents.

We are, he says, in a time of “two intersecting transitions”: The first is a passage in generations. Younger leaders are “arriving with new questions but increasingly without old knowledge.” The second transition is the passage from clergy to laity. “The spiritual, intellectual, and psychological formation of these new lay leaders will be highly diverse,” he observes. “Their loyalties (and economic ties) will be to families, communities, professional groups, and so on, in a completely different fashion that was the case with priests and nuns.” These transitions in Catholic identity and lay leadership emerge as *the* crucial—and inter-related—challenges for the future.

## CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Steinfels makes a telling examination of the Catholic institutions past and present: hospitals, schools, universities, and social services. He points out the most of these are now in the hands of lay people rather than religious orders. This change has led to a loss of catholic identity, he says, and these institutions’ relationships to various governmental bodies have led to further identity confusion.

Steinfels reports a lack of a sense of Catholic identity among all Catholics, but especially among young adults. He says (and my experience leads me to agree) that how the laity are formed and how they decide to be involved in Catholic institutions and parishes is going to be crucial to maintaining our Catholic identity in this country. Lay people already have significant roles as lay ministers and as those who speak and “preach” for the church in the arenas of the workplace and public life. The role of the hierarchy in leading the reflection on is central, as well as its willingness to participate in meaningful dialogue with lay people.

## ROLE OF CATECHESIS

What do these challenges for lay leadership and catholic identity mean for catechetical leaders?

A chapter is devoted to the state of catechesis in our country at present. Among the positive developments he sees are a focus on “rendering faith affective as well as intellectual, a matter of mentoring as well as memorization, of conduct as well as convictions.” He also says that texts, materials, and methods have improved immensely and that adult education, or, as many prefer, “adult faith formation,” has become the stated objective of religious education at least in the documents of the church, although not often in its practice.

*Peter Steinfels will be a keynote speaker at NCCL’s Annual Conference in Louisville in 2005.*

Steinfels notes that Catholic elementary and secondary schools no longer reach significant numbers of future Catholics: "In 1998, 52 percent [of all Catholic children of school age] were in parish catechetics programs, compared to only 16 percent in Catholic schools." Getting parents genuinely involved remains a challenge.

He feels that the role of the parish in nurturing Catholic identity is significant but undeveloped at present. Such efforts as "whole community catechesis" and "Generations of Faith" need to be grown and implemented in parish communities. Sacramental preparation, which is in transition from school-based to parish-based methods, is an essential part of this process. Also there is a real need to support parents in freely choosing to live out their role as catechists. To do it well, they need a sense of their own Catholic identity and the confidence and ability to pass it on.

One of the most significant issues he raises concerning religious education is that there is a basic lack of confidence among its practitioners and leaders. As Steinfels say it: "... as a professional field, catechetics remains insecure, full of dedication and bright ideas but nervous about its relations with increasingly conservative church authorities, and consequently defensive about its perennial critics."

### LAY LEADERSHIP

The shift to lay leadership has developed slowly, Steinfels points out, as a result of the clergy shortage as well as a refocus by religious orders on new apostolic endeavors on behalf of the third world and care for the poor. The priest shortage has reached crisis proportions; it has, of course, been aggravated by the sexual abuse scandal. Lay leadership is

essential. Many have said that this shift is being brought about by the Spirit because this is what the church of the future will need. Yet we have not yet not fully recognized lay leadership publicly in rituals that speak to the ministers themselves and to parishioners. How we as a church are going to train and form this leadership is a key question. He points out that the church has failed to make lay leadership a conscious choice. The result is a lack of faith formation designed to develop Catholic identity in the future lay leaders entrusted to maintain our institutions and nurture our faith.

### WHAT IS NEEDED

Steinfels is clear about the kind of leadership needed now: "It will press liberals to take seriously conservative anxieties about the loss of Catholic identity, some of the tendencies of academic theology, and the shortcomings of liturgical and catechetical renewal. It will press conservatives to treat world-historical shifts in attitudes toward sexuality and the equality of women as more than afflictions to be resisted or minor change requiring only cosmetic adjustments."

While one may not agree with all of the solutions proposed, Steinfels' book provides an excellent beginning for dialogue on pressing religious matters. He clearly sees the future is in the hands of the lay church: To prepare for this future, we need to discover what Catholic identity means for us as individual persons, as parishes and dioceses, and as a universal institution. **I**

*Reviewer Dan Thomas is director of religious education at Corpus Christi Parish in Dayton, Ohio.*

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Christine Streams, '96  
 Houma, Louisiana

"Being part of my Loyola group was a challenging experience that enhanced my learning and ministry skills."

## SADLIER *continued from page 8*

But change was in the air. In 1955 F. Sadlier Dinger went to see the work of Sister Maria de la Cruz Aymes in the Archdiocese of San Francisco. Working with Aymes, Fr. Frank Buckley and Fr. Johannes Hofinger, Sadlier published *On Our Way*, the first series of graded elementary religious education texts in the country, in 1957. “What Maria saw was a need for age-appropriate materials... she was improvising, using mimeographs, and she was passionate about her ideas,” says Bill Dinger. “My father took the risk to go ahead [with the series]. Passion and risk are what entrepreneurship is all about.” The series employed a three-step learning strategy: cognitive, affective and behavioral. It was designed to be attractive and clearly written in language appropriate for the child’s level of understanding, and to include catechist support material. “Without a doubt,” Dinger says, “*On Our Way* had a tremendous impact on catechetics in the United States.”

“At workshops and conferences, Bill is constantly on the lookout for people, listening to people, identifying who the voices are in edu-

cation and catechetics,” says Carole Eipers, executive director of catechetics for Sadlier. “And when you are established, the voices come to you... One of the keys to the entrepreneurial spirit of Sadlier is relationships. Not just with the customers—it’s relationships with the leadership in the church, with the church as an institution. And there is the recognition deep in Sadlier of the importance of culture.” The firm has been working with the Spanish-speaking community in the United States for more than twenty-five years.

“It’s the art of publishing,” says Dinger. “We need to listen, find good authors, determine grade level approaches, get everybody on board, get people excited about what we’re doing. That’s where entrepreneurship comes in. “About the business he says. “We’re still family-owned, so we can turn on a dime, but the risk is great. We don’t have a big corporation to fall back on. If we don’t sell our books, we can’t pay our people, we can’t continue to do what we’re doing with the community. That is the reality of publishing.”



*In the family business: (clockwise from left) Bill Dinger; Bill Dinger, Jr.; Frank Dinger; Angela Dinger; Melissa Gibbons*

Dinger sees the publisher’s role as to present doctrine in age-appropriate and attractive ways, integrating scripture and prayer. “Knowledge is important to the church’s social mission—important if we are to be able to live the faith,” he says. Though material for catechist formation and whole community catechesis are prominent on their web site, Sadlier’s focus remains on the printed word. “Forming children through an organized curriculum is very important,” Dinger asserts. “One does not replace the other.” ■

## NEDDER *continued from page 9*

Media) developing the first high school text published after Vatican II. “With *To Live in Christ* we were using what we knew from Piaget, Fowler, Goldman, study of learning styles—we were doing all that and remaining faithful to church teaching,” says Nedder. “It was 1969 and Wilkins said catechesis in high school should be ‘invitatory—kids should ask questions. The series stressed thinking about faith and making it personal.”

Everyone saw that the Hispanic population in the US was growing, Nedder says, “but the common wisdom was that you couldn’t do Spanish texts for the US because all Spanish was not the same. So we went to Puerto Rico and brought back Spanish-language materials for trials.” Based on their findings, they made E.T. Nedder’s first publication bilingual. “We were one of the original Spanish/English publishers in this field.”

He cites other trends in catechesis that can usefully be understood in reference to Druckers’

views on change: Lectionary-based catechesis flowed out of changes in perception, he says, and intergenerational programs were in part a response to demographic changes in the early 1980s.

Every entrepreneur can cite initiatives that didn’t work. “Wherever I’ve worked I’ve always had the freedom to be experimental and try things,” he says with satisfaction. In the mid-eighties, Nedder began to “envision the future,” in Drucker’s terms, working with William C. Brown, Inc., on an electronic textbook publishing venture. Within four years students at two Catholic high schools in Dubuque, Iowa, were each given a small wireless laptop with PC cards in lieu of textbooks. Nedder thought the experiment was promising, but the publishing house was sold and resold and the project was never funded. But he points out that publishers did start enhancing texts with electronics (e.g., placing

CDs in the backs of student texts, related web sites.)

The flexibility of a small house has enabled Nedder to pursue catechetical goals to which he has a personal commitment, such as multicultural awareness. He cites *A World of Saints*, which introduces children to Christian saints from fourteen nations. Another project with a personal dimension was the publication of *Ministry of Presence: Vignettes of Skid Row and East L.A. Ministry*. This modest memoir by John Steinboch, now bishop of Fresno, he published last year as a way to offer readers some counterbalance to the clergy abuse scandals. “We did it *on purpose*,” says Nedder, “and it has been well received. There are priests and bishops doing great things.”

“We are trying to be light,” says Nedder of his company. “We are trying to make a difference. I am a strong believer...I believe we are the church.” ■



## Vikki Shepp



Vikki Shepp has been appointed the new coordinator of the Los Angeles Religious Education Congress. The Youth Day and Congress brings together more than 35,000 people annually. Vikki had served as Consultant for Youth Ministry in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles since 2000. Says the Archdiocesan office, “She brings many fine leadership and coordinating skills to this ministry and her inviting, collaborative spirit will offer much wisdom and direction to this wonderful annual gathering.”

## Charles Jumonville



Charles Jumonville, Director of Christian Formation for the Diocese of Baton Rouge, has been asked by Bishop Robert W. Muench to oversee the process of moving the Office of Religious Education under the “umbrella” of the Office of Christian Formation. As Director of the Christian Formation Secretariat he will concentrate in the areas of teaching, certification as well as overall administration of the offices which make up the Secretariat: Christian Formation, Evangelization, Marriage & Family Life, Worship & Youth. Jumonville, who has served in the Diocese of Baton Rouge since 1987, previously was Director of the Bishop Robert E. Tracy Center and Director of the Office of Christian Formation.

## Rita Minkley

Rita Minkley has recently been named acting Director of the San Antonio Archdiocesan Catechetical Center.

## Sister Beatriz Martinez Garcia, SSND



On July 1, 2004 Bishop James A. Tamayo appointed Sister Beatriz Martinez Garcia, SSND as the Director of Religious Education for Children for the Diocese of Laredo, Texas.

# Sabbatical Reflections

By Edith Prendergast, RSC



I was very fortunate to be able to take a mini-sabbatical during the months of May and June. This great gift of quality time afforded me the opportunity to reflect, rest, travel and enjoy family and friends. My sojourn began with a two-week experience at the Camaldolese Hermitage in Big Sur, California. This grace-filled oasis located in Santa Lucia Mountains and overlooking the Pacific Ocean provided a space to relish solitude, silence and enter into the prayerful atmosphere of the monastic experience.

Following these renewing days I traveled to England and spent some time in London and Nottingham. While in England I connected with religious educators in the Nottingham diocese. It is gratifying to know that the Portsmouth diocese under the leadership of David Wells (a frequent speaker at our Congress) is sponsoring their first Religious Education Congress (mid-July) inspired by the Los Angeles experience.

Later I traveled to Paris and thoroughly enjoyed the many treasures of this great city. On my visit to Notre Dame de Versailles I felt right at home when I spotted a picture collage of their pastoral team displayed in the vestibule of the church together with an outline of their catechetical vision and plans for adult formation and family ministry. It seems that whole community catechesis is catching on in parts of Europe.

My weeks concluded with a leisurely and renewing visit with family and friends in Ireland. I am very grateful for this mini-sabbatical and owe much gratitude to staff who were so supportive and responsive during my time away.

## LEACH *continued from page 9*

*Wishbone*, a second successful PBS series for children was developed with a son-in-law.

At about the same time he started ColorDynamics, Leach entered the elementary catechetical publishing field with Tabor Publishing, which grew out of Argus Communications and became RCL Resources for Christian Living in 1996. His successful and profitable ventures in printing and entertainment impacted Leach’s catechetical publishing in several ways. RCL’s catechetical series, *Faith First*, published in 2000, arose from “Leach’s desire to help children and adults to integrate their faith with life in a fast-paced technology-driven world,” according to Nead. “He really believed that in order to do catechesis well, you had to stay in touch with the signs of the times.” Interest in popular technology prompted the integrated Internet component of

the series, which currently gets three to four million ‘hits’ per month. (RCL received NCCL’s Technology Award in 2003.) Video capability enabled RCL to develop *Echoes of Faith*, NCCL’s video-assisted catechist formation series. Financially successful on many fronts, Leach produced in 1996–98 what he considered his legacy to the church: *The Faithful Revolution*, a five-hour, \$2.5 million documentary on Vatican II.

“Dick considered this his living testimony to Vatican II,” says Nead, who worked with Leach during the last years of his life. “Many times Dick told me, ‘The printing company is in my blood, the entertainment company is in my head—it makes good business sense—but the religion publishing company is in my heart.’” ■

# THANK YOU!

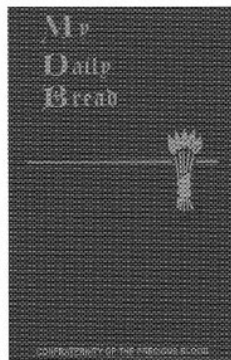
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# Looking Good: preparing and delivering presentations at conferences

By Sara R. Torrence, CMP

**G**ood visuals aid, supplement and enhance a spoken presentation. They do not take its place. Visuals should contain only the key points of the presentation, not every word.

## HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR MAKING GOOD VISUALS:

- Keep visuals clear and simple; use an abbreviated message.
- Do not use too many colors. Three is sufficient.
- Keep the color scheme consistent throughout your presentation. Changing colors can be distracting.
- Use high-contrast colors for best readability. Use light copy on a dark background or dark copy on a light background. Black on yellow, dark to medium blue on white, white on dark to medium blue, and green on white are easy to read.
- Have a heading for each slide.
- Vary the font size headings and subheadings, but have no more than three font sizes per slide.
- Upper and lower case letters are easier to read than all capitals.
- Keep all type horizontal to the screen; otherwise, it will be difficult for the audience to read.
- Use a sans serif font, such as Arial or Verdana.
- Use a minimum of text on each slide. Remember the “six by six” rule: a maximum of six lines per slide, six words per line.
- Be sure your visuals can be read by all. The smallest image seen on the screen should be one inch high for every 30 feet of viewing distance.
- If using charts or graphs, minimize figures and wording. Pie charts and bar graphs are easiest for an audience to read.
- Check and double check your spelling!



## GUIDELINES FOR DELIVERING YOUR PRESENTATION:

- Practice your presentation in advance.
- Do not read your presentation! Only refer to your notes before looking up and delivering the lines while looking straight at the audience.
- Do not look at the screen and read your slides; talk to the audience.
- Speak slowly, clearly and distinctly.
- Stand erect. Do not lean on the lectern.
- If you are a speaker who prefers to move around and not talk from notes, good! But inform the meeting manager, so that a wireless or lavalier microphone can be provided.
- Drink some warm water or light tea with lemon just before speaking. It will clear your throat.
- Begin your major presentation in a way that engages the audience, making them want to hear more.
- Build your major points logically.
- Come to your conclusion before the end, so that you can build a “closeout.”
- Wear clothes that are uncomplicated visually. The clothes should also be comfortable and flatter your body type.
- Speakers should dress one step up from the audience. If the dress code for the conference is “business casual,” dress more to the “business” side.

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## STEPPING STONES *continued from page 7*

This realization has been helpful as I develop materials that take into account the number of people who are venturing into new territory. Whether it is writing a catechist manual or article on leadership or offering a workshop to parents, I am aware that each person has to start somewhere. Having had a variety of experiences—some grand successes and some dismal failures—helps me speak the language of those who are trying to carry out their responsibilities with patience, grace, and a sense of humor.

### PASSION

Every minister needs to be fueled by passion for what she or he does. Over the years, my own has veered in the direction of domestic spirituality. This stems from growing up in a family rooted in ritual and steeped in Catholic culture. I met my husband while serving in a missionary program in Canada and together we have searched for and shared a dream of making a difference in the world through the faith that underlies our marriage. Raising children affords me a compassionate and empathetic view of the challenges that young parents face.

One characteristic of an entrepreneur is that she sees a need and moves to fill it. Years ago, I was inspired by the address delivered by the late Bishop Kenneth Untener at an NCCL conference. “If I had only one thing to do,” he said, “I would teach people to pray.” I have long realized

a need to help families name, affirm, and nurture faith within their day-to-day experiences and to help catechetical ministers make connections to the home that are relevant and realistic. Like Bishop Untener, I believe that this has to be grounded first in the development of a rich spiritual life. My newest book, *A Parent's Guide to Prayer* (Twenty Third Publications) is an effort to help parents develop a prayer routine within their daily lives and then to guide their children in the same way. It was a labor of love, drawing upon a passion for prayer in my own life as a married woman, mother, and lay minister.

There are not many days when I wake up wondering where I will go from here. I have more ideas for books and articles than I will ever be able to write. My work in spirituality continues to grow and I have recently been asked to direct retreats for Methodist and Episcopalian women's groups. The national interest in multigenerational catechesis means that I will contribute what I can to the development of sound resources for both parishes and families. As the church struggles with issues ranging from the abuse scandals to daily morale, there is a need to keep encouraging those who labor long and hard in parish offices and diocesan centers. I plan to keep watching for the needs and ways to fill them, supported by the stepping-stones that have been placed so blessedly in my path. ■

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listen and coach catechetical writers through their various projects. When my family moved to Kansas City some years later, I was fortunate to be invited by a group of bishops to create a training institute that served eighty home mission dioceses. Seven years later, when we moved the Institute for Pastoral Life to Loyola University in New Orleans, I stayed in Kansas City and, once again, “re-invented” my role in this ministry.

### FREELANCING

At that point I became a freelancer. I was fortunate that my long experience and broad contacts came together to make this a viable option for me. Although freelance catechesis is a high-risk occupation (but then who today has job security?) it gives me the opportunity to help people in one place learn about options from elsewhere, to explore different ways of doing things others have tried. It gives me a rich experience of the stories, happy and sad, of people in this church I call home. I do treasure the few opportunities I have to work long-term with a given group and to live through successes and false starts with them. But I am also glad to be a conduit to the bigger picture and help to connect the broad community of dedicated catechetical ministers in our church.

Whether working with the U.S. Army Chaplains corps in Germany and Italy or with the poorest of the poor in the remote hills of Jamaica; whether facilitating a Catechetical Congress or visiting catechist formation programs across the country for the Best Practices Project, I never fail to be inspired by the incredible dedication of the people I meet. I also never fail to be amazed at the similarity of questions and of struggles.

In the watershed experience of being with catechists in Jamaica, I found myself moved nearly to tears at the courage and hope of the catechists who sometimes had children sitting on the ground because there was no classroom. They were cheerful catechists who counted themselves lucky if they had just one very old and tired-looking textbook for the entire class and who brought food for the children knowing they couldn't learn if they were hungry. At their question and answer period, I was trying to imagine what I could possibly offer in a situation so foreign to my experience. My eyes were damp again when the first question presented was, “How can we get the parents more involved?” Evidently some things are the same for catechists everywhere!

The challenges of modern life are many: a fast pace, not enough time, competing values shouting at us, struggles within the church and even

within the parish community to name a few. One of my favorite roles is helping the dedicated volunteers and paid staff people to remember to take care of themselves—to take seriously their primary responsibility of self-care so that they can better face challenges. Many people drawn to catechetics are extraordinarily caring individuals who are likely to short-change this fundamental responsibility. Having a balanced life, even though it means sometimes saying “no” to others and to worthwhile things, makes us more able to care for those entrusted to us.

Finding the right place for the specific talents God has given each person is also imperative. The Body of Christ has many different gifts and it surely needs that rich variety. It is more important to match the person to the role than to fill a slot, even if it means forgoing a catechetical project, a program or even a grade level. The Christian thing to do is set people up for success, not set them up for failure. No one benefits from the latter. It gives me such joy to work with people, in workshops and through writing and coaching, to help them to discover where they can best use their talents.

### OUTSIDE AND IN

As an “outsider” to a particular location but an “insider” to how the church functions and to the arena of catechetics, it is often easier for me to say certain things than it is for someone in that situation. There is something to the truism about a prophet not being honored in his or her own land. And, as more than one person has reminded me, “You can say the things we need to hear—and then leave town!” However, it is not just a matter of what needs to be said, but of helping people ask the needed questions. A priest I worked with years ago frequently reminded me that answering unasked questions is a waste of time. My work allows me to provide a process within a trusting environment that enables people to look honestly and prayerfully at a situation and try to discern what God wants done at this time, to themselves ask the needed questions.

Catechists are the farmers in our church. They plant the seeds and cultivate the soil for faith to take root and flourish. I try to provide tools, encouragement and support to these faithful farmers through my writing, curriculum development and workshops. This is my ministry and my privilege. ■

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## USCCB Education Department Creates Catechetical Scholarship

**WASHINGTON (CNS)** | The Department of Education of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has announced the creation of the Berard L. Marthaler Scholarship for Educational and Catechetical Leadership.

The award honors Father Marthaler, a Conventual Franciscan, for his 30 years of service as executive editor of the quarterly catechetical journal *The Living Light*.

Father Marthaler is a professor emeritus of religious studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington.

*The Living Light* was established in 1964 and since 1966 it has been a publication of the bishops' education department.

The journal will end publication with its summer issue.

The Marthaler scholarship, worth approximately \$1,000, will cover tuition for one person each year to attend the Diocesan Educational/Catechetical Leadership Institute.

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## TECH CENTER *continued from page 13*

If you are one of the technologically challenged, watch this space. Upcoming articles will show you some wonderful advances to assist you in catechetical ministry in ways only heretofore dreamed of, once the intimidation or disinterest factor has been breached!



For those "techies" who are intrigued by every new development (and at the most acute level) and experience the need to acquire and master the newest gadgets and technologies, the tech center will be an opportunity to continue melding ministry and technology. We will also be exploring the new "toys"

out there as well as different ways to use the old standbys in new ways to further our mission and ministry. Watch for articles on PDAs, software, Internet and more.

Parish catechetical leaders and diocesan staff with limited or no computer access will find it more difficult to keep up with technological advances, but some may still be of use to you. Some non-computer-dependant technologies will be explored in this column, alongside computer-enhanced

technology, and other resources are available: for example, local libraries, community centers and some schools offer computer access and internet services at little or no cost.

Not all catechetical leaders are called to be "techies"; but no matter which side of the "digital divide" we are on, we can be open to allowing a place for technology in today's church. Finding ways in which to teach and preach that are thoroughly modern is necessary to further the Gospel message in today's society. Through technology, we can bring the sacred into the mundane and provide new venues for searchers to find the sacred.

NEXT: Navigating the Waters of the WWW. Please email insights, comments and suggestions to: [Adietrich@stjohn-frederick.org](mailto:Adietrich@stjohn-frederick.org)

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**TIM RAGAN** *continued from page 5*

“I’ve never seen anyone with such a clear vision,” says Ragan’s long-time friend and fellow seminarian, Bill Casey, in whose apartment the original plan was hatched. “Tim has vision with nerve.” That first conference, at the Shoreham Hotel in Washington, had 268 registrants and thirteen exhibit tables. Georgetown University’s Monika Hellwig was the keynote speaker.

“It came off. I didn’t know what I was doing, but I knew what I wanted it to be,” Ragan says. “I lost money on the first conference, but that was part of the deal. I learned a lot. ... What’s important is that we didn’t just do that and walk away. Most businesses take a few years to get going. If you have to be profitable the first year, maybe it’s not the thing to do.” For the second conference, he did more publicity (“hardly anybody had known about the first one”) and the attendance was 888.

In the meantime, people had started coming to him for help in organizing conferences: first came the Archdiocese of Baltimore, then a contract for the USCC National Family Life Conference and a series of liturgy conferences. His original firm, Time Consultants, Inc., at first offered services such as catechist training to parishes, but that was dropped because parish budgets did not accommodate such services. “But conferences were accepted. So you go with it,” he explains.

All this discussion of money is making him uncomfortable. To clarify his position, he tells about working with a group in Catholic and Protestant health care at a time big budget cut-backs were making members anxious about the financial future of their hospitals: “The two goals on the agenda were Mission and Budget. One woman stood up and said, ‘No. We can’t serve two masters. The budget has to fit under the mission.’” He also recounts his conversation with fellow catechetical expert Bill Huebsch on Huebsch’s farm in Minnesota. “We talked about money a couple times...Bill said ‘Gee, if I was in it for the money, I wouldn’t be doing *this*.’”

“You need to be realistic about money, but it’s secondary,” says Ragan. “My role is primarily pastoral—to bring the Gospel to people.”

While always retaining that vision, the East Coast Conference has evolved with the times. In putting together conferences on liturgy, Ragan became aware of the leaders and the issues in that field. Liturgy has been an integral part of the conference since the 1980s. He reports that bringing in artists (with the help of liturgical publishers) is more and more appreciated. He also finds that his experience working with family life issues has helped broaden the conference. “The desire is to see religious education linked to other ministries in a healthy way, not separated into a catechetical corner,” he says. “The conference is getting people together—not just reading a book, but experiencing Christian community—modeling what we need to do in parishes so people can take that back with them.”

“My heart right now is in whole community catechesis,” says Ragan. “There is a urgent need to move in that direction. It applies all the principles that have come out since the Council. It puts adults at the center. It emphasizes the domestic church. But the biggest challenge is to turn around the concept that has crept into catechesis over the years: that most people don’t feel it is their obligation to preach the Gospel. And we have to be there for the whole community, not just those who come to

our churches.” In other words, we all are invited to the table, and into the kitchen. Ragan is happy to be our server.

Coaxed to talk about the qualities needed to create and maintain a successful venture like the East Coast Conference, he replies, “You have to be positive, have a sense of humor. You have to focus on a goal and have a real clear idea of what you want to do—and put yourself secondary to that. Otherwise things can affect you personally.” A few challenges—a slow start, wariness from some church authorities—have not slowed him down. “As long as I’m clear in my mind that I’m trying to do the right thing—I’m not going to be deterred,” he says with confidence.

“I like the independence to be creative in what I do and invite other people into the creative process. It’s fun,” says Ragan. “Over the years we’ve changed our services but our mission has been constant: to bring new life to these people and to keep the vision of Vatican II alive... At times you work with the organization—at times you’re just called to go out and to do what we are supposed to do: preach the Gospel.” ■

## CATECHETICAL LEADER

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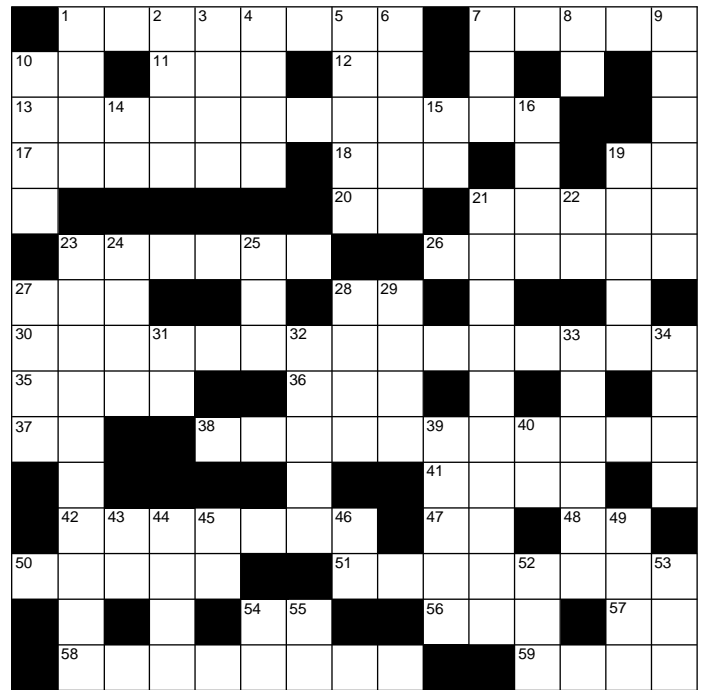
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*Megan Anechiarico graduated in May 2004 from the Washington Theological Union with a M.Div. and an M.A. in systematic theology. She was recently hired as the coordinator of youth and young adult ministry at St. Patrick's Parish in Victor, NY.*

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